

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

I'm here to testify in opposition to SB 103. Why? MEA is opposed because this bill is not in the best interest of public education or our kids.

Laws were passed in 2011 that greatly changed the way schools do business. At that time, legislators decided that more information was needed to fully implement the changes that were made. To that end, they created the Michigan Council on Educator Effectiveness (MCEE). Members of this Council were appointed by Governor Snyder, former Speaker Bolger and Senate Majority Leader Richardville. After almost two years of work, the council released its results.

At that point, a group of stakeholders was convened by then Rep. O'Brien and Rep. Zemke to turn the report into legislation. Months of work later, bills were introduced that had the support of such diverse groups as GLEP and MEA, Students First and MASA. For those of you new to your office, let me assure you that this is a rare circumstance. The legislation passed the House with overwhelming bi-partisan support. Again, this is rare on legislation this significant. You may ask how this happened. It happened because every time someone started to push a personal or professional agenda, Rep. O'Brien said, "What's best for kids." In spite of all this, the legislation died in lame duck.

Now we are looking at a very different bill. This legislation focuses on maintaining the status quo. For people who don't want to change how they are doing things, this legislation allows them to continue doing what they've always done and so they like it.

But the MCEE report, research, common sense and our members from across the state, tell a very different story. They say a tool that is a simple checklist isn't an adequate professional practice evaluation tool. Teachers who are evaluated by an administrator who isn't trained in how to use the tool or give feedback or coaching, say the process is, at best, a waste of their time, as it pulls them away from the classroom. At worst, it is used for reasons that have nothing to do with improving teaching skills.

I've heard people say that since most of our teachers are rated effective or highly effective, we don't need a new tool. For the most part, all of our teachers are doing well. But I've also heard that too many teachers are rated effective is proof that the tools aren't working.

Teachers are on probation for five years. I don't think it's a surprise that most of our teachers are effective. Surely it doesn't take longer than five years to determine whether or not a person will make a good teacher. But that aside, I believe the accurate statement is that most of our teachers are great, but we still need minimum standards on the tools. We don't need them so districts that have to change tools will suddenly discover a bunch of bad teachers. We need them because all teachers, even those who are highly effective can grow in their profession. And that's best for our teachers and our kids.

Administrators who are trained in the tool, in coaching and giving feedback are able to provide a rich evaluation process that helps those who are struggling and continues to inspire those who are doing a great job. An evaluation system needs to be about helping everyone improve, not just to fire teachers.

And last, I'd like to talk about testing. And to clear up inaccurate information that was presented during testimony on this bill. This bill allows between 16-40% of a teacher's evaluation to be based on a state assessment. Forty percent is too high. And if it's left this way, I believe you will be right back here changing those percentages very soon. One test isn't an adequate measure of student growth. And there are a growing number of parents who oppose this kind of testing and are choosing to have their children opt out of the test. This is especially true at the higher grades where testing becomes especially burdensome.

I'll close with this. There are many reasons or excuses not to make real change: alleged tenure problems, a tendency toward status quo, money, etc. But all those problems can be addressed. There is really only one good reason to change this bill so that it requires a high quality evaluation tool and trained administrators. And that's because it's best for the kids.

Sincerely,

Christina Canfield

MEA Lobbyist